

Mr. Michael Pietsch, v.p. and ex. editor
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Harold Weisberg
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10/27/97

Dear Mr. Pietsch,

The continuing scandal about what should be called The Dark Side of Sy Hersh, a scandal that may well sell more books and make you more money, reminds me, what ever became of peer reviews?

If you had had a competent peer review rather than assuming that anyone who worked for the "house assassins" was completely dependable, you'd early on have known of fakery. I refer to the story that seems to have been adapted from the fabrications of Judith Campbell Exner, that the Kennedys were behind the CIA's mafia plot to assassinate Castro. Nobody who is an authentic expert would not have recognized this for the faking it is. I enclose a record disclosed ^{by} the CIA to me on it and a copy of the FBI's informing Robert Kennedy about the exposure of it. As you'll see from the CIA's own once-secret record, of which only two copies were made, that the plot was known only to six high officials of the CIA. No Kennedy was privy to it. And once exposed it was done, forever. Not that the mafia types ever made any real effort. (It was of the August before JFK was elected!)

As I remember, I knew Mike Ewing as one of a group of ^{good} ~~good-guy~~ students ^{of the 1970s} who said they were interested in the JFK assassination. Once he was on the assassins committee I had nothing to do with him except for a couple of calls from him. I

had nothing to do with that committee other than expose its prejudices, errors and preconceptions, without ever a single response or denial. They all had to follow the party line of the general counsel who required them all to sign oaths of perpetual secrecy to get and hold their jobs.

In those couple of calls Ewing was hung up on the mafia, a total irrelevancy in the actualities of that assassination. He then wrote a book for the late Bud Fensterwald with one of those mafia allegations in it. Bud paid off the man who sued over that book.

If you question my competence to make such allegations I also enclose one page of an FBI filing in one of my many FOIA lawsuits against it. I alleged under oath myself, not ^{by} an immune lawyer's pleading, that the FBI filed perjurious statements in one of those lawsuits. It replied that I could make such allegations ad infinitum because I knew more about the subject than anyone then in its employ.

I also ^{regret} ~~regret~~ that of all the subjects available for books and of all the muckraking that can be done you and Hersh combine to defame the man who saved the world from incineration and at the risk of his political life began detente.

Pls. excuse my typing. I'm 84, in impaired health and it can't be any better. Sincerely, Harold Weisberg

Harold Weisberg

This low-priced Bantam Book has been completely reset in a type face designed for readability, and was printed from the original hard-cover edition. NOT ONE WORD HAS BEEN OMITTED.

KHRUSHCHEV REMEMBERS

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enough missiles already to destroy New York, Chicago, and the other huge industrial cities, not to mention a little village like Washington. I don't think America had ever faced such a real threat of destruction as at that moment.

Meanwhile we went about our own business. We didn't let ourselves be intimidated. Our ships, with the remainder of our deliveries to Cuba, headed straight through an armada of the American navy, but the Americans didn't try to stop our ships or even check them. We kept in mind that as long as the United States limited itself to threatening gestures and didn't actually touch us, we could afford to pretend to ignore the harassment. After all, the United States had no moral or legal quarrel with us. We hadn't given the Cubans anything more than the Americans were giving to their allies. We had the same rights and opportunities as the Americans. Our conduct in the international arena was governed by the same rules and limits as the Americans'.

We had almost completed our shipments. As the crisis approached the boiling point, the Western press began to seeth with anger and alarm. We replied accordingly, although not so hysterically. Our people were fully informed of the dangerous situation that had developed, although we took care not to cause panic by the way we presented the facts.

I remember a period of six or seven days when the danger was particularly acute. Seeking to take the heat off the situation somehow, I suggested to the other members of the government: "Comrades, let's go to the Bolshoi Theater this evening. Our own people as well as foreign eyes will notice, and perhaps it will calm them down. They'll say to themselves, 'If Khrushchev and our other leaders are able to go to the opera at a time like this, then at least tonight we can sleep peacefully.'" We were trying to disguise our own anxiety, which was intense.³

3. When the top men in the Kremlin turn up at the Bolshoi Theater in a body, all smiles, it frequently (though not invariably) means that a crisis of some kind is brewing. One of the

Then the exchange of notes began. I dictated the messages and conducted the exchange from our side. I spent one of the most dangerous nights at the Council of Ministers office in the Kremlin. I slept on a couch in my office—and I kept my clothes on. I didn't want to be like that Western minister who was caught literally with his pants down by the Suez events of 1956 and who had to run around in his shorts until the emergency was over [see page 481]. I was ready for alarming news to come any moment, and I wanted to be ready to react immediately.

President Kennedy issued an ultimatum, demanding that we remove our missiles and bombers from Cuba. I remember those days vividly. I remember the exchange with President Kennedy especially well because I initiated it and was at the center of the action on our end of the correspondence. I take complete responsibility for the fact that the President and I entered into direct contact at the most crucial and dangerous stage of the crisis.

The climax came after five or six days, when our ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, reported that the President's brother, Robert Kennedy, had come to see him on an unofficial visit. Dobrynin's report went something like this:

"Robert Kennedy looked exhausted. One could see from his eyes that he had not slept for days. He himself said that he had not been home for six days and nights. 'The President is in a grave situation,' Robert Kennedy said, 'and he does not know how to get out of it. We are under very severe stress. In fact we are under pressure from our military to use force against Cuba. Probably at this very moment the President is sitting down to write a message to Chairman Khrushchev. We want to ask you, Mr. Dobrynin, to pass President Kennedy's message to Chairman Khrushchev through unofficial channels. President Kennedy implores Chairman Khrushchev to accept his offer and

best remembered of such occasions was the evening before Beria's arrest. Beria himself, of course, was included in the party.

to take into consideration the peculiarities of the American system. Even though the President himself is very much against starting a war over Cuba, an irreversible chain of events could occur against his will. That is why the President is appealing directly to Chairman Khrushchev for his help in liquidating this conflict. If the situation continues much longer, the President is not sure that the military will not overthrow him and seize power. The American army could get out of control."⁴

I hadn't overlooked this possibility. We knew that Kennedy was a young President and the the security of the United States was indeed threatened. For some time we had felt there was a danger that the President would lose control of his military, and now he was admitting this to us himself. Kennedy's message urgently repeated the Americans' demand that we remove the missiles and bombers from Cuba. We could move the missiles and bombers from Cuba. We could sense from the tone of the message that tension in the United States was indeed reaching a critical point.

We wrote a reply to Kennedy in which we said that we had installed the missiles with the goal of defending Cuba and that we were not pursuing any other aims except to deter an invasion of Cuba and to guarantee that Cuba could follow a course determined by its own people rather than one dictated by some third party.

While we conducted some of this exchange through official diplomatic channels, the more confidential letters were relayed to us through the President's brother. He gave Dobrynin his telephone number and asked him to call at any time. Once, when Robert Kennedy talked with Dobrynin, he was almost crying. "I haven't seen my children for days now," Robert Kennedy said, "and the President hasn't seen his either. We're spending all day and night at the White House! I don't know how much longer we can hold out against our generals."

4. Obviously, this is Khrushchev's own version of what was reported to him. There is no evidence that the President was acting out of fear of a military take-over.

We could see that we had to reorient our position swiftly. "Comrades," I said, "we have to look for a dignified way out of this conflict. At the same time, of course, we must make sure that we do not compromise Cuba." We sent the Americans a note saying that we agreed to remove our missiles and bombers on the condition that the President give us his assurance that there would be no invasion of Cuba by the forces of the United States or anybody else. Finally Kennedy gave in and agreed to make a statement giving us such an assurance.

I should mention that our side's policy was, from the outset, worked out in the collective leadership. It wasn't until after two or three lengthy discussions of the matter that we had decided it was worth the risk to install missiles on Cuba in the first place. It had been my feeling that the initial, as well as the subsequent, decisions should not be forced down anyone's throat. I had made sure to give the collective leadership time for the problem to crystallize in everyone's mind. I had wanted my comrades to accept and support the decision with a clear conscience and a full understanding of what the consequences of putting the missiles on Cuba might be—namely, war with the United States. Every step we had taken had been carefully considered by the collective.

As soon as we announced publicly that we were ready to remove our missiles from Cuba, the Americans became arrogant and insisted on sending an inspection team to the island. We answered that they'd have to get the Cuban government's permission to do that. Then the Chinese and American press started booing and shouting about how Khrushchev had turned coward and backed down. I won't deny that we were obliged to make some big concessions in the interests of peace. We even consented to the inspection of our ships—but only from the air. We never let the Americans actually set foot on our decks, though we did let them satisfy themselves that we were really removing our missiles.

Once the evacuation was begun, there was some question in our minds whether the Americans would